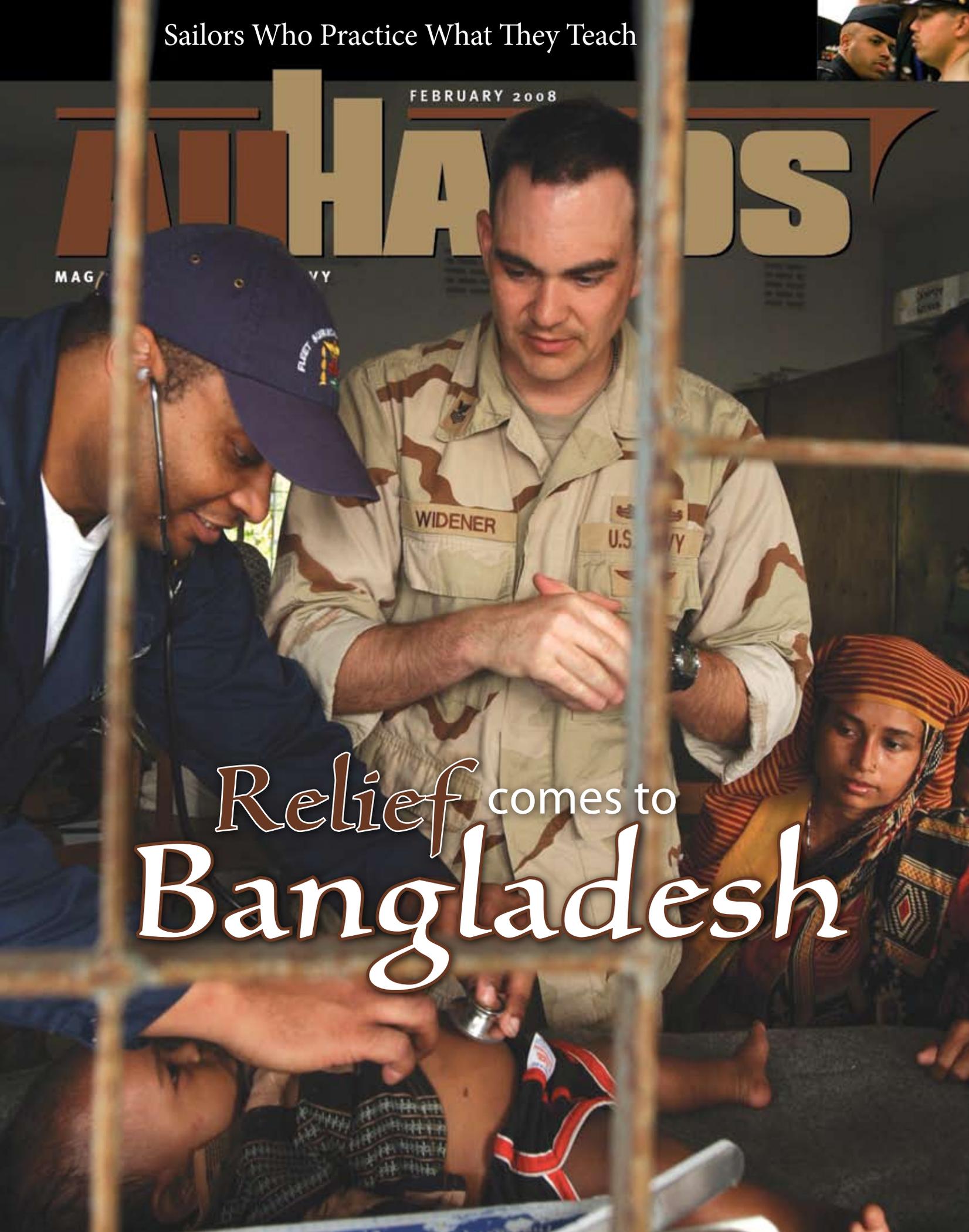


Sailors Who Practice What They Teach

FEBRUARY 2008

ALL HANDS

MAGAZINE



Relief comes to
Bangladesh



[On the Front Cover]

HM1(FMF) Calvin Tinson (left) and HM1(FMF) Widener, assigned to Fleet Surgical Team 4, examine a child during the Navy's humanitarian aid mission to Rangabali, Bangladesh, after Tropical Cyclone Sidr.

Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Peter R. Miller

[Next Month]

All Hands heads to San Antonio to the Master-at Arms school.

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February

22 Operation Sea Angel II



The United States offered humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts after Tropical Cyclone Sidr slammed into Bangladesh late last fall with winds in excess of 156 miles per hour. Sidr devastated one of the world's most densely populated countries, but the forward-deployed Navy and Marine Corps Team arrived on scene to offer immediate support.

Photo by Sgt. Bryson K. Jones

28 Rescuers From Above

The naval aviation rescue swimmer executes search and rescue operations from rotary-wing aircraft. A rescue swimmer is physically conditioned to perform demanding rescues in all operational environments, and they have the expertise to provide fleet commanders with the ability to assist DOD and civilian personnel in distress. They do this day after day – "So others may live."

Photo by M1(AW) Brien Aho



14 Sailors Practice What They Teach

Recruit division commanders (RDC) operate at the heart of Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes' mission. They are the mold from which recruits shape their image of what it means to be a Sailor. RDCs take the helm every day, shaping today's civilians into tomorrow's Sailors. But, what makes an RDC the right person for the job? Where do they hone their skills before donning the red-rope – RDC "C" School.

Photo by MC1(AW) R. Jason Brunson



Brad Keselowski (left), the driver of NASCAR's No. 88 Navy "Accelerate Your Life," Monte Carlo SS, watches as Lt. Cmdr. Ed Rohrbach demonstrates how to negotiate one of the many challenges in the obstacle course at Naval Special Warfare Command, Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado.

Photo by MC2 Kevin S. Beauchamp

Speaking with Sailors

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
MCPON (SW/FMF) Joe R. Campa

Two topics we've discussed as a Navy during the last year have been the importance of leadership and the value of our heritage. We're going to continue to emphasize them both, and I'm relying on every community within our service to help me with that.

On the deckplate level, there's one specific group I expect to continue to hammer those messages home to – our Navy's first class petty officers mess. No group of leaders within our Navy has a degree of access or level of influence on our junior Sailors comparable to our first class petty officers. And I've seen first-hand the positive results of their impact.

Very few things are more impressive than walking across a quarterdeck and seeing a squared-away first class standing officer of the deck. There is no question that while that he's is on watch, nothing is happening on that ship without his knowledge or his permission. Look at the watchstanders – alert and vigilant. Watch the entire team when activity slows. Training is taking place.

Our first class petty officers take ownership of opportunities to lead, and they inject life into them. Our Sailors recognize that and feed off that energy, that drive to tackle more. We need to leverage the abilities of those leaders even more.

One of the most vital relationships in our service is that of the chief and division officer. If they are working together, communicating and leading their Sailors, there's very little that division couldn't accomplish. And if the first class is involved, I guarantee those Sailors are being set up for success.

That is a deckplate triad: the divo, the chief and the first class. They rely on active communication and they share the same priorities: mission accomplishment and Sailor development. Division officers and chiefs are trained within their own communities to effectively interact with one another. It's ingrained in our culture that they do so. We must ensure, as a Navy, that the third critical piece is just as involved as the other two.

The Navy first class petty officer is reaching well beyond our lifelines. I've seen the respect they've earned in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. They are taking the Sailor spirit and Navy culture with them as they operate in a joint environment; and they're succeeding. They've shown the ability to blur service lines, moving seamlessly in and out of an Army or Marine Corps unit, back to the Navy without missing a beat.

As this year progresses, I'll be placing even more emphasis on the expectations our Navy has of this group of leaders. It starts with the Deckplate Triad but there will be much more. It's going to be a challenging year for them all. But I know they can handle it. And I'm certain they look forward to more opportunities to succeed. 



AllHANDS

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CNO Testifies Before HASC on Global Maritime Strategy

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead, Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James T. Conway and Commandant of the Coast Guard Adm. Thad W. Allen recently testified during a two-hour session before the House Armed Services Committee (HASC). They began the session by first thanking Congress and the nation for their support, stressing that together the nation's sea services will focus on remaining a balanced maritime force while promoting greater collective security, stability and trust.

In his written statement to the committee, Roughead said their new, unified maritime strategy, "The Cooperative Maritime Strategy for 21st Century Seapower" represents "unprecedented collaboration between our Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, both in the formulation of the strategy and in its implementation."

"That all three maritime service chiefs have signed this strategy and appear before the committee today is a testament to our commitment to integrating our efforts in protecting our nation's vital interests," Roughead testified.

The new maritime strategy, unveiled last fall during the International Seapower Symposium at the U.S. Naval War College, Newport, R.I., seeks to use the assets of all three of the nation's maritime services to achieve a balance of peacetime engagement and major combat operation capabilities to include forward presence, deterrence, sea control, power projection, maritime security and humanitarian

assistance and disaster response.

Roughead spoke briefly at the hearing about his guidance which he described as the execution order for the Navy on the maritime strategy.

"My guidance to the fleet is to execute our strategy," he said. "... The imperative and challenge for the Navy is to remain a balanced Navy with the force structuring and capability and capacity that can apply the enduring principles of sea power in a manner that protects vital national interests while promoting greater collective security, stability, trust and prosperity."

During testimony Roughead talked about why a new strategy was needed and the premise of the strategy, which is the belief that U.S. national security interests are best served by forward deployed maritime forces capable of preventing and deterring conflict in the global maritime system. He explained that the strategy was also shaped by the American public and their ideas on what the strategy should include.

"Through our 'Conversations with the Country,' I heard firsthand the demand of the American people to remain strong and to also cooperate internationally to secure our national interests," he said. "This solidified my conviction that the Navy needed a new strategy that would address the changing and increasingly integrated global environment while securing our prosperity through the seas and protecting our homeland." ❧

Story courtesy of the public affairs office, Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Navy Invests in Protecting Marine Mammals

No injuries to marine mammals have been attributed to sonar use since the Navy began taking additional steps to minimize harm to such animals, a Navy official said Dec. 19.

"Right now, the Navy employs 29 mitigation measures to assure that we don't hurt marine mammals when we're out doing our sonar exercises," said Rear Adm. Lawrence S. Rice, director of Naval Operations Environmental Readiness, in a conference call with online journalists and "bloggers."

Navy officials said the 29 additional measures were put into place in January 2007.

Rice acknowledged there's legitimate concern over sonar causing marine mammals to "beach" themselves. However, the ability to detect enemy submarines is essential to national security, and active sonar is the only existing technology capable of tracking modern diesel-electric and fuel-cell submarines, he said.

"Imagine if al Qaeda got their hands on a submarine and started sinking tankers exiting the Persian Gulf, where about 14 million barrels of oil leave every day, what that would do to the world's economy," he said.

To combat negative effects on sea life, the Navy funds research by universities and nonprofit

organizations into how sonar affects marine life. During the past couple of years, the Navy spent between \$10 million and \$14 million on research annually, Rice said.

"We fund about 50 percent of marine mammal research worldwide," he said.

Statistically, the number of marine-mammal "strandings" - beached whales, for example — due to sonar is extremely low compared to those caused by nature and the commercial fishing industry. Sonar was implicated in 50 strandings during 10 years, Rice said.

This averages out to a rate of five sonar-related strandings per year vs. an average of 3,600 strandings per year due to natural causes and about 600,000 per year linked to the commercial fishing industry, he explained.

"The numbers are still single-digit numbers of marine mammals stranding per year attributed to sonar," he said.

Despite the low numbers, the Navy is expanding its marine mammal program and will increase its funding of independent institutions' research to \$18 million annually over the next five years, Rice said.

The research focuses on the locations and abundance of marine mammals, physiological and behavioral effects of sonar, and protective tools the Navy can use to manage its impact, he explained.

The Navy has also taken action through NATO to extend worldwide its 29 mitigation measures.

"We gave those [29 mitigation measures] to NATO, and there's a move to incorporate those in the NATO planning document," Rice said. ❧

Story by Kristen Noel, American Forces Press Service, Alexandria, Va.

Navy Waives Advancement Exams for Select GWOT Sailors

A NAVADMIN, released Dec. 13, provides guidance for administering Navywide advancement exams to Sailors who are deploying, deployed to or returning from operations in Iraq, Afghanistan or the Horn of Africa.

"These changes are made as we learn how to best support our Sailors fighting the global war on terrorism," said Vice Adm. John C. Harvey, Chief of Naval Personnel.

NAVADMIN 336/07 supersedes a previous message NAVADMIN 139/07, which also affected Sailors' ability to take advancement exams while in these regions.

Some of the guidance listed in the new message includes:

- All chief and limited duty officer candidates who are eligible, meet the requirements of the new message and have the commanding officer's approval are waived from the advancement examination. NAVADMIN 139/07 did not include candidates going up for board for their first time.
- Sailors who are within 60 days of a pending deployment to these regions may request an early examination if eligible. An early exam for E-4 to E-6 may be requested and administered if the deployment date falls within a three-calendar month window prior to the month of exam administration.

Shipmates

The National Naval Medical Center recently named **Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Asia Gordon** as its Junior Sailor of the Year.

Gordon, who works in Bethesda's Intensive Care Unit as the assistant leading petty officer, said hard work and dedication to patient care are what made her stand out among the other nominees.

Gordon was nominated twice in 2007 for Junior Sailor of the Quarter, leading to her selection as Junior Sailor of the Year.

"[Being selected for this award] makes you proud," she said. "It really makes you stand out in the command as well."

Gordon added that the level of teamwork she witnesses everyday in her unit is what motivates her to perform at a high level. Her co-worker's ability to go above and beyond for the patients in their care is inspiring, she said.



"Sailors taking the exam up to E-6 are recommended to take the exam before they are deployed to these areas," said Jim Hawthorne, head of exam administration division at Naval Education and Training, Professional Development and Technology Center, Pensacola, Fla. "You won't be able to take it during training, and you may not get to take it while you are on deployment."

The NAVADMIN also provides detailed instructions for E-4 to E-6 candidates in theater who are unable to participate in an advancement exam. It should be read in its entirety due to the specifics.

"The flexibility provided in the NAVADMIN is in no way intended to disadvantage any Sailor. Every effort shall be made to provide Sailors the best opportunity to perform well on their exam," according to Harvey.

For more information read NAVADMIN 336/07 or visit the

Navy Personnel Command Web site at www.npc.navy.mil. ❧

Story by MCSN Ken Ingram, Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tenn.

Mesa Verde Commissioned Newest Navy Ship

More than 300 Sailors and a platoon of Marines manned the rails of USS *Mesa Verde* (LPD 19), the newest *San Antonio*-class ship, bringing her to life during the commissioning ceremony recently held at Port Panama City, Fla.

The ship is named in honor of Mesa Verde National Park in southwestern Colorado. Congress established Mesa Verde as the first cultural park in the National Parks System in 1906. This is the first U.S. Navy ship to be named Mesa Verde.

Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a former U.S. Senator from

Ricky's Tour

By MC1 Mike Jones





▲ **UT2 Joshua Quitmeyer, a Seabee attached to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 3, uses a mirror to shave at a hygiene pit at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.**

Photo by MC2 Dustin Coveny

◀ **Sailors assigned to air department aboard USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) set up an aircraft barricade during flight deck drills.**

Photo by MCSN Kevin T. Murray Jr.



▲ **Quarterback and CTT1 Jakob Chauvin, an instructor at the Center for Information Dominance Corry Station, runs through a gauntlet of Army defenders during the fifth annual CID Corry Station Army/Navy Flag Football Game at Corry Station, Pensacola, Fla.**

Photo by Gary Nichols

▲ **Members of the Pearl Harbor Survivor's Association of Tidewater salute during the national anthem at a memorial ceremony held on board Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek commemorating the 66th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attacks.**

Photo by MC3 Tyler Jones

continued from page 7

Colorado, addressed ship's company, family members and several thousand guests reflecting on the tradition of Native Americans building a strong bond with the military.

"The relationship between our native people and the U.S. military indeed has become stronger and stronger with each passing decade," said Campbell. "We have the highest per capita rate of enlisted of any ethnic minority."

Campbell's wife, Linda Price Campbell, the ship's sponsor, gave the order to, "man our ship and bring her to life."

Cmdr. Shawn W. Lobree became the first commanding officer of the ship and will lead a crew of approximately 360 officers and enlisted personnel and three Marines.

"With this ship the United States will take the fight to the enemy forward from the sea with capabilities never seen before," said Lobree. "The crew before you today – they are aggressive, dedicated, salty, engaged, educated, physically and mentally fit, and most of all, ready to go to sea."

As a critical element in future expeditionary strike groups, the ship will support the Marine Corps mobility triad, which consists of the landing craft air cushion vehicle, the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle and the *Osprey* tilt-rotor aircraft (MV-22).

The ship will support amphibious, special operations, and expeditionary warfare missions in keeping with the new maritime strategy that postures the sea services to apply maritime power to protect U.S. vital interests in an increasingly interconnected and uncertain world. **SN**

Story by MCz Gino Flores, Fleet Public Affairs Center Southeast, Mayport, Fla.

Cruise Officials Recognize Ronald Reagan and HS-4 for Successful Medical Evacuation

Princess Cruises honored the crew of USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) and Helicopter Anti-Submarine Warfare Squadron (HS) 4 during a press conference and recognition ceremony Jan. 6 aboard the cruise ship *Dawn Princess*.

According to Princess Cruise officials, the ceremony was held to bring together the officers and crew from *Ronald Reagan*, the *Dawn Princess* and U.S. Coast Guard officials who played major roles in the recent successful medical evacuation of a 14-year-old Laura Montero who was suffering from a ruptured appendix while aboard the cruise ship.

Montero, who attended the press conference and recognition ceremony with her mother Trudy Lafield, was traveling with her family aboard the 2,000 passenger cruise ship when she became ill.

Captain Marco Fortezze of the *Dawn Princess* issued a distress call to the U.S. Coast Guard who then contacted *Ronald Reagan*, the closest ship in the vicinity with an on board surgical facility.

"I am delighted that Laura is here with today with her mother and that she looks so good," Fortezze told the group of attendees.

"It's very exciting for me to gather with everyone," added Fortezze, noting this was the first time everyone involved in the medical evacuation was able to meet.

Ronald Reagan was operating approximately 550 miles away

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To be considered for the "Around the Fleet" section, forward your **high resolution (5" x 7" at 300 dpi) images** with full credit and cutline information, including **full name, rank and duty station** to: navyvisualnews@navy.mil

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◀ Navy divers and special operators from SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team 2 and Naval Special Warfare Logistics Support conduct lock-out training with USS *Hawaii* (SSN 776) for material certification. Material certification allows operators to perform real-world operations anytime, anywhere.

Photo by MCCS Andrew McKaskle



▲ Capt. Troy Hart, executive officer of USS *Essex* (LHD 2), and Cmdr. Ryuji Yamada, aviation officer and executive officer of the Japanese destroyer JDS *Kurama* (DDH 144), participate in Mochitsuki, the traditional rice pounding ceremony in Sasebo, Japan, which honors the New Year.

Photo by MC3 Christian Lemus



▲ Amphibious transport dock ship USS *Nashville's* (LPD 13) visit, boarding, search and seizure team embarks towards the training support vessel *Prevail* (TSV 1) for a real-time compliant boarding simulation.

Photo by MC3 David Wycaver



▲ Laura Montevo, the 14-year-old girl who was evacuated from the cruise ship *Princess Dawn* to USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) when her appendix burst, says good-bye to Sailors as the carrier arrives in San Diego.

Photo by MC2 Dominique M. Lasco

from the *Dawn Princess* at the time of the distress call, and both ships traveled throughout the night until they were within 175 miles for the medical evacuation.

“We communicated many times during the course of the evening and it took approximately six hours before our two ships were within range so that a helicopter could be launched,” said Fortezze.

In a dramatic medical evacuation Dec. 15 that drew national media attention, an HH-60H helicopter from HS-4 was dispatched for the mission. Because the helicopter could not land aboard the *Dawn Princess*, a basket was lowered and the patient was lifted onto the helicopter. Montero was then transported to *Ronald Reagan* where life-saving emergency surgery was performed.

“Some people have stated that they are amazed and pleased that we would divert an aircraft carrier to rescue a single 14-year-old girl,” said Kraft. “What I would submit is that these kinds of things happen all the time and all over the world in our Navy. The spectrum of operations we’re ready to execute range from disaster relief to full combat operations and everything in between.”

Also attending the recognition ceremony were Rear Adm. James P. Wisecup, commander of the *Ronald Reagan* Strike Group; Capt. Charles Strangfeld, commander of Coast Guard Sector San Diego; George Wright; senior vice-president of marine operations for *Princess Cruises*; Cmdr. Paul Pensabene, commanding officer of HS-4; and Cmdr. Theron Toole, *Ronald Reagan's* senior medical officer.

“We were all pulling for Laura,” added Kraft. “And although the *Dawn Princess* is a beautiful ship,

we very much enjoyed having Laura and her mom as our shipmates for a few days.”

Story by MCC(SW/AW) Donnie Ryan and MCz(AW) Christopher Blachly, assigned to USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76).

Truman, Arctic Assist Stranded Sailors

USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) and fast combat support ship USNS *Arctic* (T-AOE 8) recently rescued seven mariners adrift in a raft in the central Persian Gulf.

While conducting a replenishment-at-sea with *Truman*, *Arctic* received a bridge-to-bridge radio call from the British-flagged cargo vessel MV *British Courage* requesting assistance in rescuing the stranded mariners.

The ships performed an emergency break away; *Arctic*, dispatched two MH-60S helicopters to the scene and put a rescue swimmer in the water who recovered the four Pakistanis and three Indian mariners.

The helicopter crews brought the mariners to *Harry S. Truman* for medical treatment, food and water. All were later transferred back to the United Arab Emirates.

The mariners had been transporting cargo from Dubai when their dhow sailed into rough seas and broke its keel. When the vessel started taking on too much water to remain afloat, the mariners abandoned ship into a life raft where they remained for two days before the rescue.

Harry S. Truman and *Arctic* are currently deployed to the 5th Fleet area of operations as part of the ongoing rotation to support Maritime Security Operations in the region.

Story courtesy of USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75).

NAVY Provides Assistance when California Wildfires Strike

Story by MC2 (SW) Jennifer S. Kimball
Photos by MCSN Jon Husman

► An MH-60S *Seahawk* helicopter from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 85 retrieves water from a lake near the wildfires in San Diego.

The morning of Oct. 21, 2007, wasn't like other peaceful laid-back Sundays in San Diego. The normally mild climate began getting warmer as smoke started filling the air, and ash was falling like snowflakes – a tell-tale sign to residents that an out-of-control fire was about to change many peoples' lives.

The fires spread quickly throughout Southern California from as far north as Santa Barbara County to the Mexican border. The fires were fueled by 100 mph Santa Ana winds, which complicated firefighting efforts and filled the air over the Pacific with dense plumes of smoke that stretched across the city skyline and beyond.

With more than 165,000 Sailors also living within the vicinity of the wildfires, Navy and DOD personnel quickly sprung into action to help.

"It gives me great pride knowing that many Sailors, civilians and family members are answering the call and volunteering in support of friends and neighbors in the community," said Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead.

On the firefighting side, air and ground crews from naval installations as far away as Colorado came to the aid of local units to augment their efforts.

On the ground, Navy firefighting efforts began Oct. 21, just before 10 a.m. Four San Diego federal firefighting engines, each carrying a crew of four was dispatched under the mutual

aid agreements signed with local authorities.

Command Navy Region Northwest sent six firemen and two structural fire engines to assist.

A helicopter coordination center (HCC) was established on Naval Air Station North Island, Calif., as a single point of contact for Navy and Marine Corps operations related to helicopter evacuations, search and rescue, bucket brigade, fire-spotting and fire-mapping.

"We wanted to provide a focal point for helicopter operations here at North Island," said HCC Director, Lt.Cmdr. Joe Amaral. "If there wasn't this sort of communication in place, there would be no way for a firefighter on the ground, who needs airborne assets, to get the assistance in a timely manner."

The HCC tasked local helicopter squadrons to provide assistance.

"We're experienced aviators, and we're able to adapt quickly, but it helps to have their expertise," said Lt.Cmdr. Brian Wilderman, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 85 operations officer who flew some of the firefighting missions.

Shortly after the HCC was established, HSC-85 flew water-drop missions. HSC-85 is the only squadron in San Diego qualified to provide firefighting support and routinely trains for this kind of mission.

Two HSC-85 firefighting crews were among the first three aircraft in the air on the afternoon of Oct. 22, performing water-drop missions.

"It's tough out there, but by us being out here we're adding another dimension by providing air support," said Wilderman.

By the third day, several C-130 airplanes equipped with modular air firefighting systems from Naval Base Ventura County, dropped fire retardant and water on the fires.

HSC-85 made 1,242 water drops, dumping more than 500,000 gallons of water on the wildfires.

While HSC-85 conducted firefighting missions during the day, the "Black Knights" of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HS) 4, also stationed at NASNI, flew missions at night using infrared cameras called forward looking infrared (FLIR) to assess fire damage and survey for active fire or hidden embers.

"The FLIR is our eye in the sky," said Lt. Cmdr. Gregory Leland, HS-4 maintenance officer. "It enabled us to spot and track the fires at night."

Additionally, Amphibious Construction Battalion (ACB) 1 played a huge support role for Cal Fire.

Task Force Bulldozer was deployed Oct. 26 to supplement overtaxed firefighting equipment and resources.

"The crews are excited to put their training, experience and expertise to work helping the local citizens of San Diego County," said Lt. Andrew Cline, ACB 1's future operations officer.

Sailors also helped construct 10 miles of fire

breaks around one community and supplied water to Cal Fire trucks coming from the frontlines.

"I feel good knowing I got to play a part in protecting families from the fires, said Construction Mechanic 3rd Class Jeremy Frew, ACB-1. I was able to see first-hand what kind of impact our close-knit community was able to provide on such a short notice."

Task force teams were manned with two 20-man Seabee crews, comprising four bulldozers, two water trucks and various support vehicles and equipment to conduct 24-hour operations for approximately four days.

"This is why I joined the Navy – to help people who need it," said Navy Equipment Operator Constructionman Apprentice Jody Vandermolen, who was part of the task force team.

The wildfires charred more than 500,000 acres, forcing more than half a million people and 20,000 pets and animals out of their houses and into shelters. As a result, Sailors answered the call.

Schools, churches, tents, a stadium and even naval base gyms were converted into temporary shelters. More than 3,000 single Sailors moved out of their barracks and aboard ships to make room for displaced military families.

About 1,400 Navy personnel and their families were welcomed into makeshift housing facilities on Navy bases, clearing shelters around the city for civilian evacuees.

"It feels good to help our neighbors in their time of crisis," said Seaman John Stocker of USS *Cleveland's* (LPD 7) Deck Department. "I can't imagine what it is like to lose everything, and I want to do what I can to help."

Local bases also took strides to assist the San Diego community by providing approximately 10,000 cots to shelters and reducing power usage.

More than 30 Navy ships shifted from being pier-connected and shore-powered to organic shipboard power, dramatically reducing power consumption on local bases, avoiding a brown-out and reducing the electrical strain on the San Diego power grid.

Sailors from *Ronald Reagan*, PCU *Makin Island* (LHD 8), USS *Benfold* (DDG 65), *Cleveland*, USS *Cape St. George* (CG 71) and USS *Russell* (DDG 59) helped civilian evacuees at centers around the county.

"The Navy and Sailors from *Cleveland*

really stepped up to help the community in this time of need," said Chief Hospital Corpsman (SW/SS/FMF) Patrick Casey. "Our ship's doctor and four enlisted corpsmen provided basic medical services to nearly 200 elderly evacuees at San Diego High School."

Sailors from USS *Chancellorsville* (CG 62) provided aid and opened their homes to 22 of their fellow shipmates.

"I am extremely proud of *Chancellorsville's* crew and their demonstrated heart for service," said Lt.Cmdr. Corey Wofford, the ship's executive officer.

Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS) Sailors provided primary care and preventative medicine services to more than 2,500 displaced personnel at seven evacuation centers. They also donated 12 wheelchairs from the hospital to the Qualcomm Stadium shelter.

Additionally, the medical center converted a minimally equipped ward into a fully staffed and operational unit within three hours of notification.

Doctors from the NMCS worked alongside civilian doctors at the Qualcomm Stadium shelter to provide 24-hour medical care for evacuees.

When the fires subsided, the Navy immediately coordinated efforts to begin the healing process, such as offering financial assistance and counseling.

Sailors, Marines and DOD families throughout San Diego County and the surrounding areas received quick-assist loans (QAL) from the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society to keep those in financial hardship from using payday loan lenders.

Sailors also volunteered to clean up Qualcomm Stadium after the evacuees left to help prepare the stadium for a much-anticipated Chargers football game.



▲ An MH-60S *Seahawk* helicopter assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 85, dumps 420 gallons of water below them on wildfires burning in San Diego County. HSC-85 teamed up with the San Diego California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to help put out the wild fires blazing across Southern California.

In the end, the recent wildfires touched many Sailors and Marines' lives personally; 3,172 Sailors and family members were evacuated from their homes; 24 military members and seven civilian Navy employees lost their homes; and there was even one Navy family fatality.

Despite being directly affected by the wildfires, Sailors never forgot their greatest purpose: to serve and safeguard their fellow Americans, as well as each other.

"The entire team came together from the afloat units to the shore establishment to the tenant commands," said Rear Adm. Len R. Hering, commander, Navy Region Southwest. "Everyone pitched in and worked well together in a very, very difficult scenario always making sure we were focused on accommodating and taking care of our folks." ❧

Kimball is assigned to Fleet Public Affairs Center, Pacific, San Diego.

Blue Rope

Sailors who practice what they teach to Red Rope

Story and photos by MC1(AW) R. Jason Brunson



“It’s 0530, I’m sleeping soundly, and... ‘Outta your raaaackks, let’s go, let’s go, let’s goooooohhh!’ he yells. I jump out of my rack and as my feet hit the deck I see him approaching from the corner of my eye.

“His was the last voice I’d heard the night before and now here he is again. His face and those razor-sharp creases are the first thing I’m seeing today. He is clean-shaven, squared away and full of motivation. When does this man sleep?

“It’s 0535, and I’m clean-shaven, squared away and full of motivation. I wonder what my RDC has in store for us today?”

Recruit division commanders (RDC) operate at the heart of Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes’ mission. They are the mold from which recruits shape their image of what it means to be a Sailor. RDCs are hard-charging, highly motivated and highly qualified individuals. These exceptional petty officers and chief petty officers take the helm every day, shaping today’s civilians into tomorrow’s Sailors.

But, is it enough to be an exceptional Sailor? What makes the RDC the right person for the job? Where do they hone their skills and learn the Navy’s teaching objectives before donning the red-rope of an RDC.

RDC “C” School is a 13-week long, physically challenging, intensive hands-on training course that prepares prospective RDC “blue ropers” with the skills, perspective and physical readiness to be a recruit division commander.

◀ **In less than half an hour since reveille, Recruit Division Commander (RDC), LNC(SW) Robert Nail has his recruits dressed, in line and awaiting further instructions. The recruits aren’t the only ones with a full day of training to look forward to. Nail has two student RDCs shadowing his division.**

Upon reporting, RDC school students are assigned a seasoned mentor and class.

Senior Chief Storekeeper Jeffery Kirby, the Recruit Division Commander “C” School, leading chief petty officer, said the school currently has 12 instructors who teach classes year round. There are four groups of students operating simultaneously, in different phases of training. At any given time there are approximately 40 to 50 students in the curriculum.

He said this training is important because it prepares the students to do their jobs. They are taught exactly how and what they will be putting the recruits through as RDCs.

“We put them through a drill phase, which teaches them guidon, cutlass and the flags. Then the students go into the admin phase, where they are taught all of the managerial

functions and processes of an RDC. The next phase, is the star phase of training where students learn “The House,” Kirby said.

Chief Machinist’s Mate (SS) Nathan Battle came to RTC after 11 years in the Navy. Battle, in his fifth week of training (the star phase), said the class was working on things like folding and stowing, compartment and personnel inspections as well as dynamic material inspections. This includes the lockers and the way the gear is folded and stowed.

“In our class we have to do things the same way the recruits do. Our instructors come through and inspect us the same way we will inspect the recruits, so we know exactly what we are looking for when we become RDCs. This way we aren’t blind sided by surprises, and we are better able to help our recruits,” Battle said.

According to Battle, the course is intense

– there is pressure – almost like going back to boot camp. For those who have been out in the fleet for a while, it may have been a few years since they have had to recite a general order while going through a really detailed uniform inspection.

He said nervousness comes from the fact that it has been so long since they have experienced scrutiny like this. Students, (not unlike recruits) want to be successful, so when the inspectors have them under a microscope they get nervous.

“You start thinking to yourself, ‘Man, I thought I checked everything. I know I checked my gig line, or I thought my creases were straight,’” Battle said.

It’s a valuable part of the training because it reminds the students of how the experience will affect their recruits.

“It may have been a while for me, but these kids have never been through it,” Battle said. “But, learning this in training serves as a reminder that it’s not just about yelling all the time. You have to be creative and able to come up with different approaches. If recruits get too nervous to retain what you are trying to convey, they shut down. You have to find ways to reach them and motivate them.”

He said the instructors and the other RDCs provide examples of various things they do in

those kinds of situations and remind students to set the example for their recruits.

“I’m big into Navy history, so I like to break that out whenever possible. That’s one of my tools. It gets them interested in the ‘why’ we do things this way,” Battle said. “It sparks that flame, or gives them motivation.”

Battle had recently conducted an inspection with recruits, noting it would have been a nerve-racking experience just a few weeks before. But, because he was in the star phase

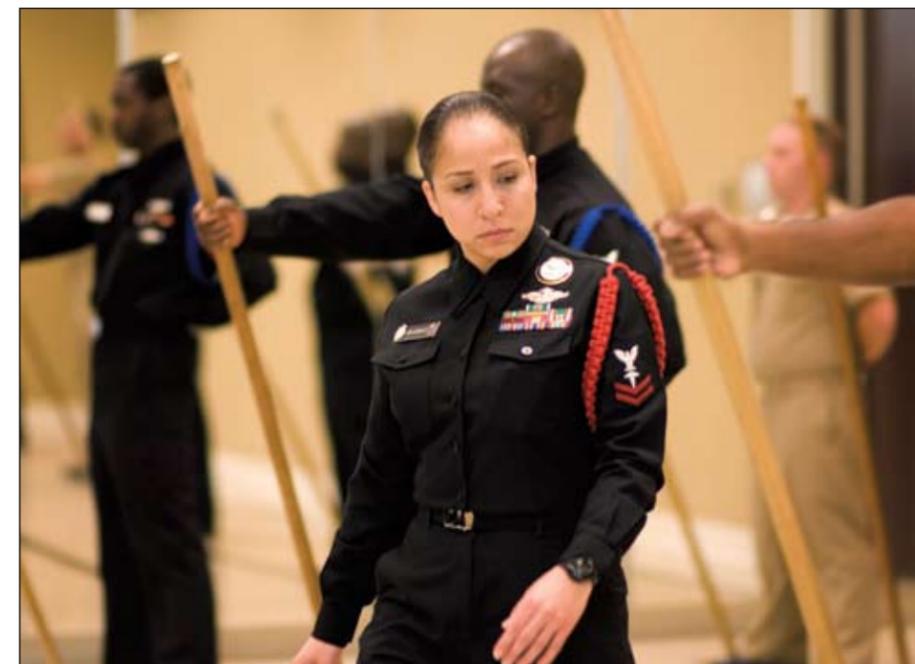
at the time and had been going through the same inspections himself, it was almost second nature. He also had an RDC there, to help guide him.

“He would pull me off to the side and give me pointers, help me to remember certain things to check,” Battle said. “He would point out the small things, the little details, because what we are actually doing is trying to get the recruits ready for their real inspection.”

He explained, though the recruits might not realize it, the inspections are a training event, designed to build in their memory. That is why, during an inspection, they will do things like turn recruits’ hats sideways or leave their identification card hanging out of their pocket.

According to Battle, when they go through the process of fixing their uniforms, the recruits have to think their way through things. It becomes ingrained in their memory to check their pockets, make sure their cover is straight and to be detail-oriented. It helps them out in the long run. That’s one of the things the other RDC was helping him with during his inspection of the recruits.

“I could see the nervousness in the recruit’s faces. They are only in their second week of



◀ HM2 Fernanda Velazquez teaches the “drill” phase of Recruit Division Commander “C” School. This phase covers proper procedures of the guidon, cutlass, marching formations and teaches students the importance of attention to detail.



▲ The training program at Recruit Division Commander “C” School is designed to mirror that of the boot-camp experience.



▲ HM1 Melissa Chapman reviews an instruction with students at Recruit Division Commander “C” School.



▲ OS2 James Maudsley observes as Recruit Division Commander (RDC), LNC(SW) Robert Nail corrects one of his recruits, who had “gear adrift,” (items improperly stowed) in his bunk. Maudsley is a student RDC (blue rope) shadowing Nail’s division.

training, so this is still a lot for them. They are going through the same anxiety now that we have been going through in the classroom,” Battle said.

“I’ve gone through a lot of Navy training programs in my career,” Battle said. “This is one of the most challenging of them all. That is probably why I enjoy it, because it keeps me on my toes. I’ve never seen a more professional and dedicated group of instructors.”

Battle decided to be an RDC because he really wants to help mold future Sailors. He takes a lot of pride in what he has done throughout his career, and enjoys helping people.

“This is the beginning for these recruits. I like the fact that I can build them up and see the results right away,” Battle said. “That’s an awesome thing and it’s a large part of the reason I came here. I want to train these young people and send them out to fleet ready to go.”

Chief Legalman (SW) Robert Nail said his biggest unexpected lessons learned during “C” school were the value of patience and persistence.

“I thought I had patience, until the first time I had a group of more than 80 teenagers in a room and tried to get them to do what they

didn’t want to do. That’s when I began to learn patience,” Nail said.

“Persistence comes from never giving up. You just can’t give up on these kids,” he added. “I think a lot of people may have already given up on some of them.”

Kirby said the next phase, the leadership phase, teaches the blue rope students situational leadership, which is specific to RDCs. The training is tailored to RDCs because their leadership situation is different than that of a typical Sailor.

Nail added this is where blue ropes learn when and how to be firm, as well as how to build an effective recruit chain of command. This has a trickle-down effect by also teaching recruits lessons in leadership.

“RDCs are taught to be intense, because with only three RDCs responsible for 88 recruits, it’s important not to show weakness. RDCs must appear stern, yet still approachable. They can’t allow recruits to stray outside of their training objectives, this keeps them safe and on schedule,” Nail added.

“Time management is really critical for an RDC,” Kirby said. “It’s tough, getting the recruits through the pipeline process, while

keeping them out of trouble and focused on training, dealing with their issues at home, like being separated from family and learning the Navy all at the same time.”

According to Nail, it’s the little unexpected things that pop up when dealing with a large group, and these little things can take the division off course if the RDC isn’t prepared to handle them.

“You deal with just about every single leadership obstacle here. Recruits show up here and they all have different problems. If a recruit has a personal problem – the spouse is having a baby, or a death in the family – you have to know how to handle these situations on the fly,” Nail said. “How do you do the right thing, and get that recruit the help they need?”

Nail said the recruit’s well-being is the most important thing to think of, because if their mind is on their problems at home and they aren’t able to deal with them, they can’t train.

“They will shut down and you will not be able to get through to that recruit,” Nail said. “No amount of yelling or push ups and sit ups will bring them back.”

According to Kirby, learning how to develop strong recruit chief petty officers and section



▲ OS2 James Maudsley does pushups during morning physical training. Maudsley says that conditioning is a critical part of the 13-week long training course, because being an RDC is physically challenging. They have to be able to do every thing the recruits are expected to do.



▲ HM2 Fernanda Velazquez, an instructor at the school, leads warm-up exercises during morning physical training with students of Recruit Division Commander “C” School. Just as RDCs do with their recruits, the instructors at RDC school train along with their students.

leaders greatly enhances an RDCs ability to train and lead their divisions. A sound recruit chain of command is important to the RDCs helps them stay focused on training and keeping the division on point.

Kirby said the shadowing phase is one of the most effective ways of instilling the lessons learned at RDC School. After the first

six weeks of in-classroom curriculum, the perspective RDCs “blue ropes” go out on the streets with a “red rope” (RDC). They follow them through their daily life seeing first hand the different situations, how they arise and how the facilitators deal with them.

“Hopefully that adds new tools to their toolbox for when they become RDCs,” Kirby said.

“It’s definitely like being on the other side of the mirror. You have to know every thing they need to know before they get here,” said Operations Specialist 2nd Class (SW) James Maudsley, a blue roper in the shadowing phase.

He added that interacting with other RDCs who have one to six pushes (classes) under their belts, gives them visual access to several different aspects and experiences while going through “C” school.

Nail said the idea is to pair the blue ropes with a good RDC, someone who can show them things that can’t be taught from a book, and how to turn lessons from the book into action.

“Shadowing is where you begin to learn how to wake up 80 individuals, get them shaved, dressed in a height line and ready for chow in 30 minutes, while dealing with some recruits who have to go to medical or various other issues,” Nail said. “That’s stuff you can’t learn from a book. A learning experience like that is very rewarding.”

Nail said he enjoys having blue ropes shadowing him, because they are also an asset to the division, and because he likes to share his successes and failures with them.

“You can show them - ‘this is how to inspect a recruit’ or ‘if you look from this angle you can see this.’ ... It enables them pick up different little ways to get the job done quicker,” Nail said. “That’s how I was trained.”

◀ HM1(FMF/SW) Vantroi Sibilliamartinez discusses different ways to help recruits who are distracted with personal issues during boot-camp, with his students at Recruit Division Commander “C” School.





▲ MMC(SS) Nathan Battle conducts his first personnel inspection of recruits. He said the experience is extremely valuable to student RDCs, because it provides them with a hands on perspective that can't be duplicated in the classroom.



▲ HM1(FMF/SW) Vantroi Sibiliamartinez performs a dynamic personnel inspection for MMC Nathan Battle, a student in the "Star" phase of training at Recruit Division Commander "C" School. Battle said this training helps the students build a clear understanding of what to look for when they become red ropes and are conducting inspections themselves.

► LNC(SW) Robert Nail observes MMC(SS) Nathan Battle during a personnel inspection. Battle said having an RDC along with him is a tremendous help, because they can provide insight based on experience.



◀ DC1 Troy Plese (left) acts as the "Recruit Petty Officer In Charge" (RPOC), recording remarks during a personnel inspection. Plese and his classmates are in the "Star" phase of training at Recruit Division Commander "C" School.

◀ CS1 Carey Jones performs a dynamic personnel inspection for students of Recruit Division Commander "C" School.

Kirby said the intensity level of the school for the staff, mirrors that of the boot-camp experience. It's thought of as, "taking Sailors out of their fleet mentality." It's how staff members (E-5 and above) come to understand the perspective their recruits will have.

"You have people coming here who have been told their entire career that they are a top 10 percent Sailor. When they stand personnel inspections and get hit for their ribbons, gig lines and things like that, it wakes them up. It makes them think about things like attention to detail," Kirby said.

According to Maudsley, stepping out of the comfort zone is another part of the challenge for many of the blue ropers.

"You might be an EP Sailor in your rate, but when you come here you aren't in your rate anymore. You are a blue rope," Maudsley said. "So, you step out of your environment and into a new one, which you really don't know much about."

"For example," Maudsley said, "If I check into a new command as an operations specialist, I know what my job is. I know how to get better at it. I know how to break

out amongst my peers. Here, whether you are a second class, first class, or a senior chief, everyone is pretty much starting from scratch.

Nail said the instructors at RDC School constantly emphasize the goal is to send quality Sailors out into the fleet.

"It's our responsibility to do that," Nail said. "When the recruits arrive here they have no clue how to wear a uniform, what a chief is or what teamwork is. They show up as 88 individuals, and to see them struggle to find themselves, struggle to come together and

complete boot camp as a team I feel like a proud parent."

The blue ropers are ready to become red ropers when they have passed the academic portion, and completed the shadowing phase of the 13-week training curriculum and passed two physical fitness assessments, scoring at least good or better.

Chief Aviation Warfare Systems Operator (AW) Todd Deal is the special programs screening liaison at RTC. He screens all the packages from applicants wanting to become RDCs. Last year he received approximately 270

packages, 75 percent of which were approved.

He said the primary traits they are looking for are Sailors with strong leadership traits, are physically fit and have no history of getting into trouble or problem areas with family advocacy or alcohol-related issues.

Deal noted this is not an easy job. It can be extremely demanding. Red ropers generally push four divisions before being given what is called a "hold job," such as teaching RDC school or performing inspections. The hold job typically lasts nine to 12 months, with more regular working hours (7 a.m. to 4:30

p.m.). After the much-needed break in tempo, RDCs resume pushing divisions until the end of their tour.

He added, "Sailors who come here want to give back for the experiences they've had in the Navy or perhaps they [want to improve] the quality of Sailors. They want to be part of the solution. They want to roll up their sleeves and get to work, training the Sailors of the future Navy." ■

Brunson is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.

▼ People gather on a field at Rangabali College in southern Bangladesh to receive medical attention in wake of Tropical Cyclone Sidr.

Relief comes to Bangladesh

Operation *Sea Angel II*: Brings Help and Hope to Those in Need

Story by Lt. Nathan Christensen

When Tropical Cyclone Sidr slammed into the country of Bangladesh late last year with winds in excess of 156 miles per hour, it devastated one of the world's most densely populated countries. The storm left more than 3,200 people dead, more than 1,000 missing and several hundred thousand homeless.

While the initial destruction caused by the tropical cyclone was catastrophic, the lingering effects, sustained most heavily in the country's southern coastal regions, proved to be the most challenging to overcome. The United Nations estimated the cyclone affected more than 6.7 million people in 30 of the country's 64 districts, causing severe economic losses. Sidr also washed out roads, making remote villages inaccessible and supplies extremely difficult to deliver. As a result, the need for emergency water, medical care, food and other supplies became more pressing each day after the storm hit for those left homeless.

The United States offered its support and prepared to help in humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) efforts if asked to do so by the Government of Bangladesh.

During a visit to Dhaka, Bangladesh, soon

after the cyclone, Adm. Timothy J. Keating, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, rallied support when he met with Gen. Moeen I. Ahmed, the chief of Bangladesh's defense forces, Geeta Pasi, U.S. Charge d'Affairs in Bangladesh, Denise Rollins, Director, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Marine Brig. Gen. Ronald L. Bailey, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) commanding general and Rear Adm. Carol M. Pottenger, commander, Task Force (CTF) 76. Bailey served as the on-scene commander for Operation *Sea Angel II*, the name given to HA/DR efforts in Bangladesh, and Pottenger directed all U.S. relief efforts afloat.

"We are here to help the people in their time of need," said Keating, after meeting with Bangladeshi Army officials in Dhaka.

The Bangladeshi Army's chief of general staff, Maj. Gen. Sina Ibn Jamali,

said American forces were invited to help distribute aid swiftly to areas that needed it most.

"They will be working with us, uniform and uniform," he said.

At the request of the Government of Bangladesh, USS *Kearsarge* (LHD 3) began providing emergency aid and conducted HA/DR operations until USS *Tarawa* (LHA 1) arrived on station. To do so, *Kearsarge* steamed more than 3,000 miles from off the coast of Somalia in less than six days, arriving in the Bay of Bengal ready to execute air, ground and sea operations

Tarawa, en route to 5th Fleet from 3rd Fleet, steamed more than 6,600 miles to relieve *Kearsarge* in the Bay of Bengal and continued to carry out relief efforts until the military assistance element of disaster relief operations ended in early December.



▲ A helicopter assigned to Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261 flies over the storm battered countryside in southern Bangladesh.



▲ The citizens of Bangladesh wave to the crew a CH-46E *Sea Knight* helicopter from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261 as they deliver water to help aid the victims of Tropical Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh.

Additionally, a team from 3rd MEB, worked at the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, to help coordinate relief efforts conducted by U.S. naval forces along with the U.S. Department of State, USAID and Bangladesh government.

Amphibious ships like *Kearsarge* and *Tarawa* are inherently flexible and designed to conduct operations across a wide spectrum of mission areas, both ashore and afloat. To military commanders, government officials and international relief organizations, *Kearsarge's* arrival brought the ability to purify water, transport relief supplies ashore by air and sealift and provide medical treatment to Bangladeshis by mobile medical teams stationed aboard the ship.

“We provided a unique mix of capabilities including airlift, logistics support and the ability to support the humanitarian relief efforts already in place,” said Col. Doug

Stilwell, commanding officer of the 22nd MEU (SOC). “Our goal was to assist the Bangladesh government, Bangladesh military and non-governmental organizations in reducing further loss of life.”

Once operations began in full force aboard *Kearsarge* and then on *Tarawa*, the ships fully executed the mission they were tasked with. Both flight decks were full of life as CH-46E *Sea Knight* and CH-53E *Super Stallion* helicopters made multiple trips to deliver aid to cities in Bangladesh such as Barguna, Barisal, Patuakhali, Kalapara, Doblarchar and Zia.

While Marine helicopters on board *Kearsarge* and *Tarawa* did most of the heavy lifting, Navy SH-60 *Seahawk* helicopters transported personnel to and from both ships. Three Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) from Assault Craft Unit (ACU)

▲ A Bangladeshi boy from Bawfal, Bangladesh, waits for food rations to be offloaded from a Marine CH-46E from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit.





Photo by MCSN Christopher Lange

◀ An aerial photograph shows the destruction left behind by Tropical Cyclone Sidr.

“You could see how extensive the damage was from the sky,” he said. “The situation out there was very bad. Trees knocked over ... people without food, warm clothes or shelter.”

He added that helicopters were absolutely essential to reach many areas where roads had been washed away.

Preparing supplies and water for delivery was an all hands effort aboard both ships as Sailors and Marines worked together as a cohesive “Blue-Green Team” to accomplish the mission.

Aboard *Kearsarge*, for example, the ship’s engineering department made more than 12,000 gallons of potable water for transport ashore. *Kearsarge* Sailors and Marines from all departments filled five-gallon bladders in the ship’s hangar bay using hoses. Air, supply and combat cargo department personnel then loaded the water bladders into palletized boxes and delivered them to the flight deck using forklifts, for transport ashore via helicopter.

“It was definitely an all-hand’s effort,” said Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class Jeff Comstock, who was responsible for coordinating water-filling efforts in *Kearsarge*’s hangar bay. “We all formed one team where each of us played a vital role in accomplishing this mission.”

“I’m very glad that I was personally able to lend a hand in this effort and provide help to those who needed it in Bangladesh,” Comstock added. “It feels good to help ... [and] we did everything we could to help them.”

Before the U.S. military efforts of Operation *Sea Angel II* ended, *Tarawa* delivered relief supplies via helo and LCAC to 31 villages identified by the government of Bangladesh. In all, 248,925 lbs. of emergency relief supplies, including food, blankets, clothing, water purification tablets and medical supplies were distributed along with 14,309 gallons of water.

“I feel like we really helped the people

of Bangladesh and that this operation showed our compassion,” said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Amber Bretzman, assigned to *Tarawa*. “We were happy to help provide food, water, clothing and medical supplies to the hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis in need. I feel very privileged to have helped make a difference here.”

In addition to delivering water and supplies, mobile medical teams from *Kearsarge* and *Tarawa* provided health assessment and treatment to 2,355 Bangladeshis. Navy doctors and corpsmen were able to reach isolated villages by helicopter and were able to provide personalized medical care to Bangladeshis with ailments ranging from cuts and bruises to broken bones, diarrhea and acute eye injuries.

“We had the rotary-wing assets to make a mission of this nature possible, which is what truly makes a MEU so unique and flexible,” said Lt. Cmdr. Trey Hollis, the 22nd MEU (SOC) chief surgeon, who visited six Bangladesh cities in seven days. “The ability to get our medical teams into these geographically isolated and impoverished areas was the difference maker.”

Lt. Cmdr. Lu Le, a Navy surgical doctor attached to the 11th MEU (SOC) embarked aboard *Tarawa*, led a team of 10 people into various areas of Bangladesh during a two-day period and said most of the injuries seen by their team were cyclone related.

“We saw about 300 patients in a matter of five hours one day,” she said. “We treated a lot of people with wounds, bone fractures and lower back pain. With those kinds of winds you can’t avoid being hit by the trees, flying debris and everything that went around them. It’s a very rewarding experience to be



Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Peter R. Miller

▲ A CH-46E *Sea Knight* assigned to the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) lands as Bangladeshi citizens watch during a humanitarian aid mission after Tropical Cyclone Sidr passed through the area.

out here, giving the little we have, to make their world a little better.”

Hundreds of Bangladeshis waited their turn to be seen by the “Sea Angels,” as they were called, to help cure them. One Bangladeshi woman cried while waiting in line as she clung to her eight-year-old boy. The woman said the storm had killed three of her four sons. A flying branch injured her only remaining son’s leg during the cyclone.

She watched apprehensively while *Kearsarge* Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Louis Scott, cut tape for a bamboo splint. After her son’s leg wound was treated, the woman’s tears dried and she left smiling knowing her son would be fine and that his bone bruise would heal in time.

“These people are very hopeful and are happy to be able to see doctors here in this remote location,” said Bangladeshi Army Major Lokman. “It is psychologically uplifting that they came all the way from the United States to help us.”

Capt. John Miley, commander, Amphibious Squadron 1, expressed his pride as humanitarian operations came to an end.

“These Sailors and Marines did an outstanding job,” he said. “I know everyone on board was glad to be able to help provide disaster relief to the people of Bangladesh.”

Pottenger said she was grateful for the work Sailors and Marines had done.

“I am extremely proud of the entire Navy-Marine Corps team that participated in the humanitarian efforts here,” said Pottenger. “Countless lives were saved, and a face to the world’s generosity and compassion was shown through teamwork and efforts of these extraordinary Sailors and Marines. This was the epitome of a Blue-Green effort.”

One Bangladeshi man, treated by *Kearsarge* doctors said, “In the eyes of my village, you are the face of the world. Your presence here shows us that the world cares.”

In short, Operation *Sea Angel II* was about people helping people. Despite religious, ethnic and language differences, Sailors and Marines demonstrated the world’s compassion to the people of Bangladesh and unequivocally brought help and hope to those in need. ✎

Christensen is assigned to CTF76.



Photo by MCSN Christopher Lange

▲ Soldiers from the Bangladesh Army unload bags of fresh water from a U.S. Marine Corps CH-46 *Sea Knight* in Galachipa, Bangladesh.

4, embarked aboard *Kearsarge*, also helped deliver needed aid to the people of Bangladesh.

“The multipurpose capability of *Kearsarge* gave us the ability to provide disaster relief by air via helicopter or sea via LCAC,” said Capt. James Gregorski, *Kearsarge*’s commanding officer. “Sailors and Marines were eager to help ease the burden of this tragedy.”

“The government of Bangladesh pledged to feed more than 2 million people left destitute



Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Peter R. Miller

▲ Lt. Cmdr. Trey Hollis (left) chief surgeon of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) and Lt. Cmdr. Lou C. Cimorelli a family practice physician and ward officer aboard USS *Kearsarge* (LHD 3) render medical aid to a victim of Tropical Cyclone Sidr in South Khali, Bangladesh.

by flooding, but washed-out roads left many of the villages inaccessible,” he continued. “That’s where our helicopters came in. The helos distributed donated supplies from the mainland to remote villages.”

Capt. Nathan Densford, a 28-year-old Marine pilot assigned to Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261, described the destruction after returning to *Kearsarge* following a sortie to cyclone-hit districts in southern Bangladesh.



RESCUERS

from ABOVE

Story and photos by MC1(AW) Brien Aho

You surface, gasp for air and try to figure out how you got onto this roller coaster of water. At the crest of the next wave, you notice your ship is speedily vanishing against the horizon as it sails away without you.

What happened? Where am I? Who's going to save me? Will I die here?

Minutes, which feel like hours pass, and you start to wonder, 'How long can I tread water?' Then you hear it - a familiar, thumping sound in the distance. Your heart begins to race, you kick faster and you're suddenly awash in sea spray. As the salt water stings your eyes, a smile crosses your face because you know that in minutes there will be a fellow Sailor who has spent years training for this moment entering the watery chaos around you.

◀ AD1 Gary McGrath observes AT3 Michael Fjell perform a rescue swimmer search and recovery jump from an HH-60H *Seahawk*, during a cast and recover training mission off the coast of Egypt. McGrath and Fjell are assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 21, Det. 8 currently deployed aboard USS *Tarawa* (LHA 1).

While this scenario may only take a moment in time, for the courageous Sailors who attend Rescue Swimmer School (RSS) in Pensacola, Fla., it can take months or years of training to save a life.

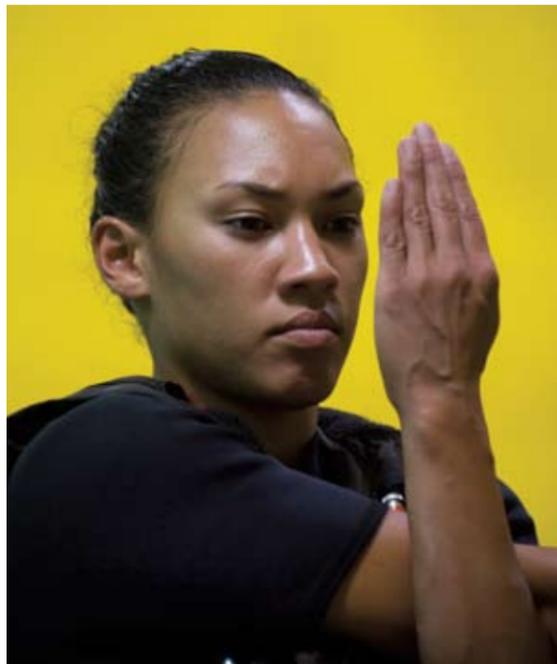
"Even though the training here at RSS is five weeks long we continue to train when we get to our next command," said Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 2nd Class(AW/SW) Roger Richards, an RSS instructor. "I've been a rescue swimmer for more than nine years and even though I have not made a rescue yet, I train for when the day comes where someone's life is in my hands."

The mission of the naval aviation rescue swimmer is to execute search and rescue (SAR) operations from rotary-wing aircraft.



▲ AW2(AW/NAC) Brandon Horton emphasizes the importance of paying attention to details during buddy towing drills.

► AN(AW) Soonja Tyrell stretches before entering the pool for the morning session of RSS.



A rescue swimmer is physically conditioned to routinely perform demanding rescues in all operational environments, and they have the expertise to provide fleet commanders with the ability to assist personnel in distress.

“So others may live” is the motto that rescue swimmers live by. It means putting their life in danger for their shipmates.

“Someone has to [have] put themselves in danger for us to have a job” said AW1 (AW/AC) Waylon Wolf, RSS Instructor. “Lucky for us Sailors are listening to safety warnings and mishaps have gone down.”

It takes a strong-willed person to make it through RSS and the other schools a candidate must go through before they serve in the fleet. The numbers are few but the quality that rises to the top is what the Navy is looking for.

“You tell the students when they first arrive here that you have to be strong mentally, physically and that you need heart and motivation to make it through,” said

► Candidates attending RSS school march to the Aircrew Water Survival Training Facility on of many pools that they use during training.

▼ RSS candidates line up in the pool for daily swim drills.

Richards. “They have to have pride and we can see that in their eyes; we know for the most part who will make it through.”

A rescue swimmer travels a training pipeline between a minimum of three states and four schools. As RSS candidates, the Sailor will leave boot camp in Great Lakes, Ill., and then travel to Florida where they will attend Aircrew School aboard Naval Air

Station Pensacola. Once they have finished school they go directly to Rescue Swimmer School.

After completing that portion of training, the Sailors will head to Aviation Warfare (AW) “A” school. From there they have to attend other schools like Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape school before hitting the fleet.





◀ **AW2(AW) Claude Holloway** executes morning calisthenics before entering the pool.

▶ **AN(AW) Soonja Tyrell** relaxes while being buddy towed during morning physical training in the pool.

The Rescue Swimmer School attrition rate is 35 to 40 percent. This means the Sailor jumping into danger to save a life is one of the best at what they do.

In today's world climate, the Navy rescue swimmer is being asked to fill more roles. As the U.S. Navy responds to global humanitarian needs such as Bangladesh, the tsunami in Indonesia, or domestic crises like the wildfires in San Diego and Hurricane Katrina, a rescue swimmer must think and respond quickly to accomplish different tasks beyond saving a person in the water.

Delivering food by helicopter or rescuing someone off the roof of their home has been a common scenario played out time and time again on the nightly news.

"There were Navy rescue swimmers working with the other services during Katrina," said Richards. "We never know from day to day what we will be called up to do."

At RSS, students go through a rigorous schedule that requires endurance and a strong will. Students are pushed to their limits. As they go through the process, they begin to understand how much the body can take.

"All the training we do here is considered 'high risk' training," said AW1 Ryan McCartney. "We push our students and do a lot of physical training outside and in the pool. In Florida we push up to the limit of the temperature conditions."

Most students come to RSS already in good physical condition. They have already finished Aircrew School and have met the physical requirements which consist of the following in order; two pull-ups, 50 sit-ups, 35 push-ups, a 1.5 mile run in under 12 minutes and a 400-meter swim in under 11 minutes.

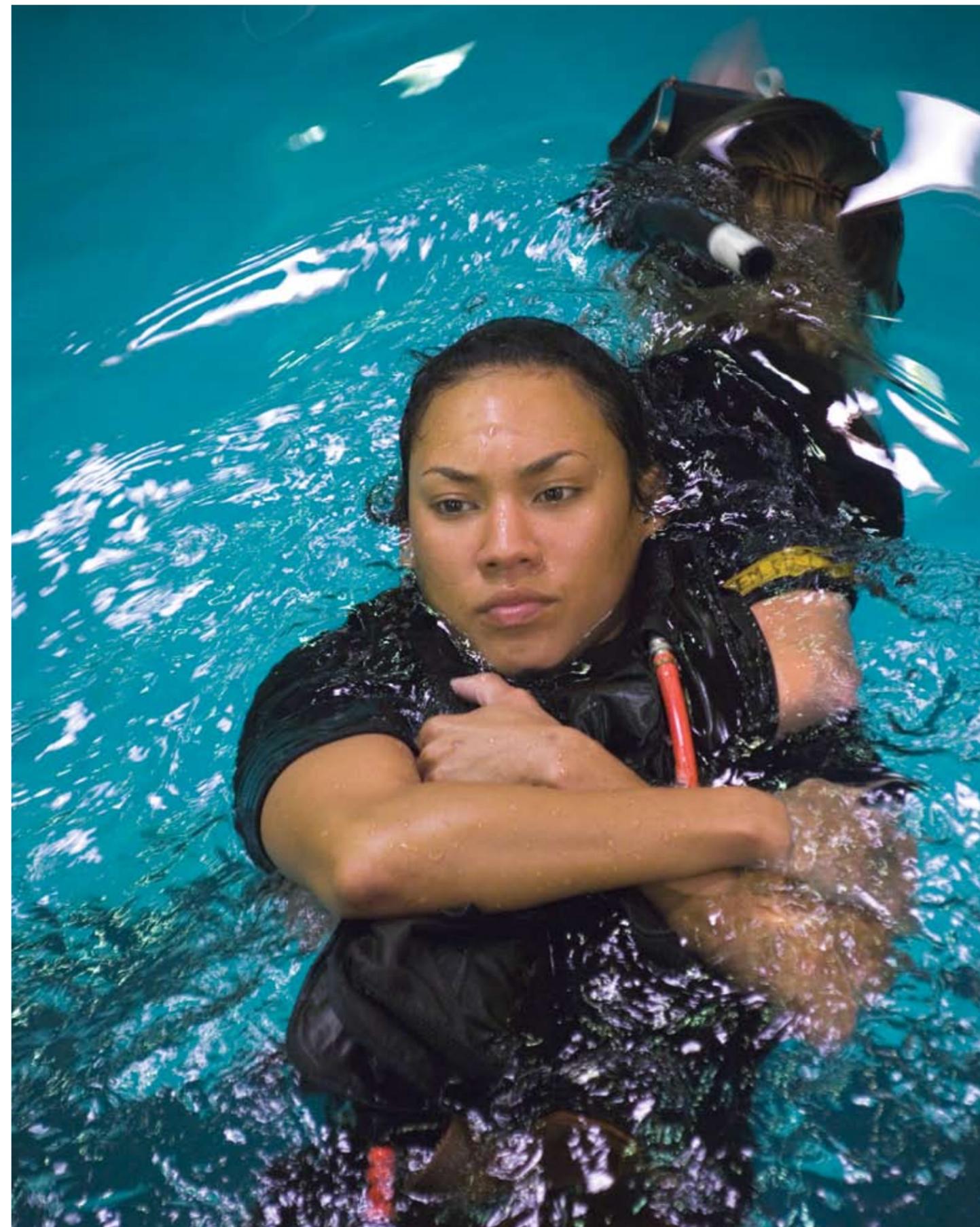


▲ **RSS candidates** line up in the pool for daily buddy towing drills.



▲ **AW2(AW/SW) Roger Richards** conducts morning physical training with the RSS candidates.

▶ **AW3 Tadashi Morishita** is dragged during buddy towing drills during RSS training in Pensacola, Fla.





▲ An RSS candidate performs a body sweep checking for any entanglements or bodily injury while instructors grade them on their performance.

◀ AW1(AW/AC) Waylon Wolf RSS instructor encourages a candidate to pick up his time during swim sprints in the pool.



Once classes start, students continue their physical training three times a week striving to reach required levels of fitness before being allowed to move ahead in class.

The additional physical training the students endure consists of 90 minutes of extensive calisthenics and a three mile run daily. Strength training, swimming 800 meters in less than 20 minutes, 400 meter buddy tows in 16 minutes or less; followed by a 500 meter swim in 13 minutes or less. After all that, they swim an additional 2,000 meters in less than 50 minutes.

“These guys have to be comfortable in the

water at all times,” said Richards. “We push them and push them until they think they can’t go any longer. But once they realize how far the body can go, we allow them to move on.”

Women also attend RSS and must go through the same test as the men go through. Upper body strength is usually the biggest obstacle, because it’s necessary for buddy towing individuals.

“I grew up swimming and feel very comfortable in the water,” said Airman (AW) Soonja Tyrrell, an RSS student. “Having to tow a much heavier person has been a challenge, but it’s not a choice for me. It’s more of a psychological thing of mind over matter - because I will pass.”

“We keep them busy in the pool trying to build their endurance by swimming sprints,” said McCartney. “Once we feel comfortable that they are ready to move forward, we allow them to advance into the [third]

“Someone has to put themselves in danger for us to have a job.”

— AW1(AW/AC) Waylon Wolf

► RSS candidates conduct first aid training as part of their schooling in Pensacola, Fla.



phase where they begin disentanglement procedures.”

The course provides students with hands on experience in first aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, rescue equipment, waterborne lifesaving techniques, day/night water entries, parachute disentanglement, search and rescue tactics and helicopter operations.

Rescue swimmers go through these rigors because mishaps usually occur when the conditions are bad.

“It’s [on] the worst days when we are called upon, and that is why it is so important to be physically fit. We must maintain long after we leave here,” said AW2 Terra Lathrop, an RSS instructor.”

And, as the rescue swimmer approaches you he yells, ‘I’m a Navy Rescue Swimmer and I’m here to rescue you.’

The firm grip around you is reassuring, and as you are being hoisted into the bay of the helicopter you feel lucky knowing that there are brave men and women willing to put their lives in danger to make sure you make it home. ✍

Aho is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.

► U.S. Navy search and rescue swimmer, AW1 Tim Hawkins, retrieves and evacuates a victim of Hurricane Katrina from a rooftop in New Orleans into an SH-60B Seahawk helicopter.

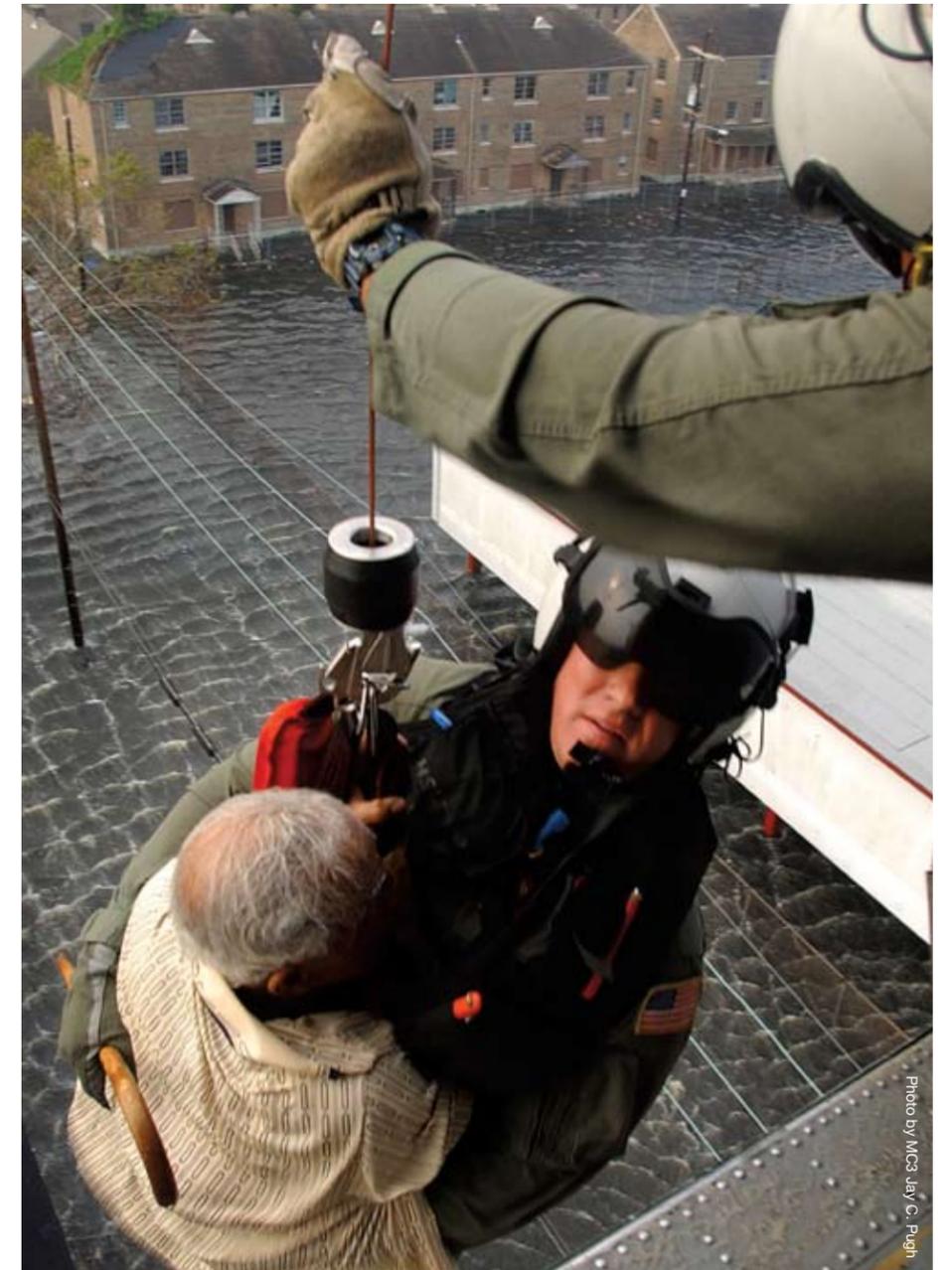


Photo by MCS Jay C. Pugh



Conceptual Design by: Tiara Smith, Department of Defense Education Activity, Aviano, Italy District • Slogan by: YNC Karen Bassingthwaite, USN, Tampa, Florida
 Federal Voting Assistance Program, 1155 Defense Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301-1155 • www.fvap.gov • vote@fvap.ncr.gov • (800) 438-VOTE

This calendar year marks a very special time for service members; it is their time to pick their new commander in chief who will assume office until 2012. This year's voting slogan, "Be Smart, Do Your Part. Vote!" was coined by Chief Yeoman Karen Bassingthwaite to encourage Sailors and their families to do just that – Get Out and Vote.

To help Sailors and their families stationed around the world to do their voting part, the U.S. Navy's Voting Assistance Program is available to provide voting and enfranchisement assistance.

The voting program ensures that all Navy personnel receive timely and accurate information regarding state and federal elections through all available means of communication. The support structure consists of 16 regional commanders who provide election materials and information to 97 installations. The information then goes throughout the Navy.

Due to the overall importance of the right for all DON personnel and their families to register and vote, the Secretary of Defense has mandated all service members and their families have access to election information and materials 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, 365-days of the year. The Navy has provided hotlines via various communications means

to include: telephone, electronic mail, internet and postal mail. The Navy Voting Program has a commitment to the democratic process for all its Sailors serving locally and abroad.

Each Navy command assigns a Navy Voting Officer to assist Sailors and their families to fill out the correct forms to cast their ballots. The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), Standard Form 76A, is available to all U.S. citizens from local voting assistance officers and the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) Web site, at www.fvap.gov. Once filled out and mailed to the applicant's local voting official in their state of residence, the FPCA acts as a request for absentee ballots for any elections to be held that year.

All Sailors and their families are encouraged to submit their FPCA forms to receive a ballot. When doing so, Sailors and their family members should follow some basic guidelines.

When determining residency for military personnel and their family members:

- One must have or have had a physical presence in the state, and the intent to remain or make the state his/her home or domicile.
- One may only have a single legal residence at a time, but may change residency each time he or she is transferred to a new location. An individual must make a

conscious decision to change residency through specific actions which may be interpreted as conscious decisions, e.g., registering to vote, registering a car, qualifying for in-state tuition, obtaining a driver's license, etc.

- Once residence is changed, a person may not revert to the previous residence without reestablishing physical presence, and the intent to remain or return.
- When requesting a ballot, Sailors and their family members should send in their FPCA – SF 76 form at least 45 days before election day. This allows ample time to process the request and mail the ballot to the requester. If applying for both registration and an absentee ballot, the FPCA may have to be mailed earlier. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) recommends submitting the FPCA in January of each year. Be sure to notify your election official of any change to your address.
- After submitting FPCA – SF 76, Sailors and their family members can expect, under normal circumstances, that most states and territories will begin mailing ballots to citizens 30 to 45 days before an election. If you have not received your ballot two weeks before the election, contact the

FVAP Ombudsman Service. They will assist you in determining when your ballot was mailed. Always execute and return your absentee ballot regardless of when you receive it. Court decisions sometimes require the counting of ballots voted by election day, but received late.

Voting Residency Guidelines for Members of the Uniformed Services and Their Family Members.

Keep in mind that uniformed service personnel and their family members may not arbitrarily choose which state to declare as their legal voting residence without meeting the state's residency requirement. The following are basic guidelines to follow in determining residency for military personnel and their family members:

- You must have or had physical presence in the state and simultaneously the intent to remain or make the state your home or domicile.
- You may only have one legal residence at a time, but may change residency each time you are transferred to a new location. You must make a conscious decision to change residency; it cannot be done accidentally. There must be certain specific actions which may be interpreted as conscious decisions, e.g., registering to vote, registering a car, qualifying for in-state tuition, etc.
- Once residence is changed, you may not revert to the previous residence without re-establishing new physical presence and intent to remain or return.
- "Home of Record" should not be confused with legal residence. "Home of Record" is the address a military member had upon entry into the service. It does not change. "Home of Record" and legal residence may be the same address, and usually are, when a person enters military service. It can remain so even though the person or his/her relatives no longer live at that location, as long as the military member has not established a residence elsewhere after entering on active duty.

If a military member changes legal residence after entering on active duty, he/she may not revert to claiming the "Home of Record" as legal residence without re-establishing physical presence and intent to remain in or return to that state. Family members of active-duty military personnel may each have a different legal residence. A spouse does not automatically assume the legal residence of the active-duty member upon marriage. The spouse must meet the physical presence and intent to remain or return criteria.

Minors typically assume the legal residence of either parent, and when they become 18, they

also have the option of establishing their own legal residence which can be different from either parent, assuming they have met the guidelines of physical presence and intent to remain or return. These are general guidelines for determining your legal residency for voting purposes. Consult your legal or JAG officer for specifics.

- Questions regarding the above which cannot be answered locally may be referred to the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program, Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, 1155 Defense Pentagon, Washington DC 20301-1155. Reach the FVAP via e-mail at vote@fvap.ncr.gov or call on (703) 588-1584, toll-free 1-800-438-8683, or DSN (military) 425-1584.

Voting Residency Guidelines for Overseas Citizens

The following are voting residency guidelines for citizens residing outside the United States. Your "legal state of residence" for voting purposes is the state you last resided immediately prior to your departure from the U.S. This right extends to overseas citizens even though they may no longer own property or have other ties to their last state of residence and their intent to return to that state may be uncertain.

- Keep in mind that exercising your right to vote in elections for federal offices only does not affect the determination of residence or domicile for purposes of any tax imposed under federal, state or local law. Voting in an election for federal offices only may not be used as the sole basis to determine residency for the purposes of imposing state and local taxes. If you claim a particular state as your residence and have other ties with that state in addition to voting, then you may be liable for state and local taxation, depending upon that particular state law. Consult your legal counsel for specific questions or situations.
- Voting Assistance Officers (VAO) at embassies/consulates will assist overseas U.S. citizens in obtaining and completing Federal Post Card Application (FPCA or SF-76) request for registration and ballot; witnessing or

notarizing FPCA forms (if required); and providing other absentee voting information as needed. Embassy/consulate locations serve also as postage-free mailing points where FPCA and other election materials may be mailed back to your local voting jurisdiction in the U.S. where absentee registration and ballot requests are actually processed. Overseas organizations such as Democrats Abroad and Republicans Abroad, and many overseas corporations have all voting materials necessary to assist citizens in requesting registration and/or an absentee ballot.

- Because election laws vary from state to state, please consult the current Voting Assistance Guide for further instructions and guidelines, which is available in hard-copy format or on-line at the FVAP Website www.fvap.gov. The guide contains state-by-state procedures to register and/or request an absentee ballot using the FPCA. All shaded areas for your state or territory (outlined in the guide) must be completed. In the residence section of the form, enter the complete street address of your last residence in that state, including your street or rural route and number. If using a rural route number, include the specific location of residence in the "Remarks" section. Your right to vote in your state and determination of voting precinct depend on your physical residence while you were within that state. ☞

Compiled from information on www.fvap.gov.

What can I do to ensure my ballot gets counted?

- (a) Start by contacting your Unit Voting Assistance Officer for help in absentee registration and voting.
- (b) Visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program's Web site at www.fvap.gov for information on the absentee registration and voting process.
- (c) Ensure that you have applied for your absentee ballot using the hard copy or online versions of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA).
- (d) Make sure your local election official has your current mailing address.
- (e) Sign and date all election materials.
- (f) Fulfill your state's witness/notary requirements (if required).
- (g) Ensure that your ballot or FPCA is postmarked.
- (h) Register to vote and request your ballot as soon as possible.
- (i) Vote your ballot and return it as soon as you receive it.
- (j) Use the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot if you are overseas and your state's absentee ballot does not arrive in time to be mailed back by the state's deadline.

Always on Call

Story by MC1(AW) Brien Aho

Taking the helm of the wave-piercing, aluminum-hulled, high-speed vessel HSV 2 *Swift* is not uncommon for the Sailors who serve on the 321-foot ship to do once or twice while stationed on her. But for Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (SW/SS) Timothy Shaeffer an independent duty corpsman on board, standing watch on the bridge is almost an every day occurrence.

There are not many opportunities for an E-6 and below Sailor in the U.S. Navy to be the Navigator of the Watch (NOW) much less the Officer of the Deck (OOD) of a large vessel, but aboard *Swift* with her crew of 45, that chance opened up for Shaeffer.

"We all have to pitch in and do extra duties," said Shaeffer. "Once I picked up Navigator of the Watch I was asked by the CO if I would like to get my OOD qualification and I jumped at the opportunity."

Besides taking care of the crew, Shaeffer is also responsible for any guests who travel along. Shaeffer must keep track of each person on board, to determine if they have been briefed about the different medical conditions they might encounter while visiting one of the eight or nine

countries along the way.

Much like any watch stander Shaeffer is on a rotational schedule on the bridge, but as a corpsman he is on call full time.

Standing OOD aboard *Swift* can have its challenges but the latest technology allows it to run smoothly with less than six Sailors.

"Driving the ship is actually kind of boring because it's done mostly with computers," said Shaeffer. "Once we navigate out of port, we set it on auto pilot and as long as the three lookouts are doing their job, the crew on the bridge can sit back and monitor the gauges."

Swift is propelled by four jet-powered engines that allow for smooth running even if one of those engines goes down.

"Driving this thing is like playing a video game. We use jets to walk the ship side to side while maneuvering in port or we can turn on a dime and it's all done using a joy stick," said Shaeffer.

For Shaeffer, filling the role of corpsman, NOW and OOD on board *Swift* keeps him on his toes and puts him always on call. 

Aho is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.

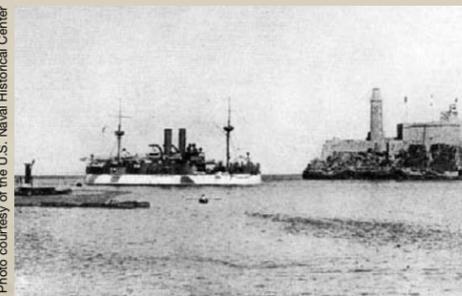
Focus on
Service

History

Remember the Maine!

Story by MC2(SW/AW) Jason McCammack

The battleship USS *Maine* arrived on station in Havana Harbor, Cuba, Jan. 25, 1898. American authorities hoped that her presence in the area would be seen as a goodwill gesture and stabilizing influence on the Spanish control of the colony. They also hoped to curtail guerilla activities. *Maine's* Commanding Officer Capt. Charles Sigsbee also had the mission to evacuate American citizens from Havana if necessary.



USS *Maine* passed Morro Castle as she entered Havana Harbor, Cuba, Jan. 25, 1898. She was destroyed by an explosion there three weeks later. (NH 48619)

At 9:40 p.m. on the evening of February 15, 1898, a terrible explosion on board USS *Maine* shattered the stillness in Havana Harbor, Cuba. Investigations would reveal that more than five tons of powder charges for the ship's six and 10-inch guns ignited,

obliterating the forward third of the ship. The remaining wreckage quickly settled at the bottom the harbor. More than half the ship's complement of 353 officers and men lost their lives as a result of the disaster.

The U.S. Navy immediately formed a board of inquiry to determine the reason for *Maine's* destruction. But due to the condition of the submerged wreckage and the lack of technical expertise, the board was not as thorough as later investigations would reveal. They concluded that a mine had detonated under the ship, but did not fix any blame for placement of the device.

Later investigations indicated the explosion was likely caused by a fire in a coal bunker which ignited an adjacent magazine.

The American public responded to the tragedy with outrage. During the four weeks it took the Navy to investigate the *Maine* disaster, many prominent American newspapers were feeding the public a steady diet of inflammatory articles blaming Spain for the disaster. William Randolph Hearst is the newspaper owner most strongly identified with publicizing the supposed Spanish conspiracy. The war-mongering newspaper style became known as "yellow journalism."

Maine's destruction did not cause the United States to declare war on Spain (as it did on April 25, 1898), but it served as a catalyst, accelerating the approach to a diplomatic impasse. In addition, the ship's sinking and deaths of U.S. Sailors rallied American opinion

more strongly behind armed intervention.

Today, you can find visit the memorial for USS *Maine* in Section 24 of Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va. The memorial's mast is the ship's actual main mast. The mizzen mast is located at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.

According to Arlington Cemetery records, the base of the mast represents the turret of a battleship. Upon that "turret" are inscribed the names of all those who lost their lives that February day. The remains of 229 *Maine* casualties that were brought to Washington, D.C., are buried just north of the memorial. **S**

McCammack is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.



USS *Maine* is destroyed by an explosion, in Havana Harbor, Cuba, Feb. 15, 1898. (NH 61236)

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For further voting information visit: www.cniv.navy.mil